

Hydrilla threatens Eno River State Park

Research by North Carolina State University and the state parks system suggests that a significant infestation of the invasive plant hydrilla in the Eno River is spreading down river at a rate of up to one mile per year.

The threat to the river basin is prompting a multi-agency task force to launch a broad public education effort to identify the best methods of treatment for the river within Eno River State Park. Those may be chemical treatment, removal of the plant by hand, introduction of grass carp, which feed on hydrilla, or a combination of those methods. The task force hopes to initiate efforts to control hydrilla in 2015.

Hydrilla is a submersed aquatic plant that can create nearly impenetrable mats of stems and leaves on the surface of lakes, rivers and other waterways. An invasive species from Asia, hydrilla impedes recreational use of waterways, crowds out native vegetation and can ultimately harm fish and other aquatic species.

Keith Neelson, Eno River State Park superintendent, and 11 other officials are members of the Eno River Hydrilla Management Task Force that is launching the public education effort. The task force involves partners from the N.C. Division of Water Resources as well as other state and federal agencies, Durham and Orange counties, and the city of Durham and town of Hillsborough.

Hydrilla infestation appears to be concentrated near Guess Road at the eastern end of the state park. It originally appeared in Lake Orange and West Fork Eno Reservoir upstream.

Fall color reports resume

Along with football and hiking, another popular autumn sport is predicting where and when the best fall color will appear.

For the second year, the N.C. Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development has enlisted state park rangers' help in reporting on fall color throughout the state. Those reports appear in a special section of the state's tourism Website.

Regular updates keep visitors posted on how fall color is progressing through the different types of forests in North Carolina. As a bonus, rangers in coastal parks will be reporting on fall fishing to the extent possible. The coastal rangers will relay reports from park visitors.



State park rangers commissioned

Fifteen new state park rangers received commissions as law enforcement officers in August and September.

Seven rangers were sworn in by Superior Court Judge Douglas B. Sasser at a special ceremony at Umstead State Park and addressed by John Skvarla, Secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Eight received commissions at small ceremonies across the state.

Receiving a commission as a Special Peace Officer at the end of 17-week basic law enforcement

Continued Other Side



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training is generally regarded as the last formal step before a ranger takes on full duties in a unit of the state parks system. During the training period prior to commissioning, a ranger is assimilated into the park and begins assuming duties in resource management and visitor service.

South Mountains upgrades campground

South Mountains State Park has upgraded its family campground next to the Jacob Fork River, revered for its stunning beauty and trout fishing.

The campground was expanded from 11 to 18 sites and all the sites were refurbished. Two of the sites are RV-compatible with electricity hookups. The best part may be a new bathhouse (with a family restroom/shower).

The renovation is a \$660,000 investment by the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the principal funding source for state park capital projects and land acquisition. The family campground sites (as well as backcountry campsites) are now listed on the parks' Central Reservations System.

South Mountains in southern Burke County is North Carolina's largest state park at more than 18,000 acres. The park also offers 15 campsites reserved for equestrians surrounding a 33-stall barn.

Hanging Rock event draws hiking crowd

In only its second year, Hanging Rock State Park's Reach the Peaks event Sept. 27 drew more than 400 registered hikers who accepted the challenge to crest five named peaks on an 11-mile trek. The event was successful beyond the expectations of the Stokes County Arts Council and the Friends of Sauratown Mountains, the primary sponsors.

"The 5k's and color/mud runs and these types of events are really trending right now, and I can see why," said Park Superintendent Robin Riddlebarger. "Long distance marathons and triathlons are not for everybody. But an event such as this, which involves the great outdoors, is appropriate for an average person's fitness level and is a wholesome family atmosphere."

While some hikers strode at record pace across the route – and some ran – the majority went at a more leisurely pace and took a few moments to enjoy the scenery at Moore's Knob, Cook's Wall, House Rock, Wolf Rock and Hanging Rock.

Riddlebarger said area business sponsors are being attracted to the event, and the long-term effect should benefit the community's economy.



Quilters extend Stone Mountain tradition

For years, a treasured quilt from the local Royal family has been displayed in Stone Mountain State Park's visitor center. Park Superintendent Janet Pearson, fearing the quilt was becoming too fragile with age to display, approached the Alleghany Quilt Guild about a replacement authentic enough to represent turn-of-the-century quilting in the region.

That replacement was presented Oct. 4 as part of the park's Old Fashion Day celebration.

To begin the project, 13 quilters from the Alleghany Quilt Guild, Elkin's Foothills Quilters and the Wilkes Quilt Group spent months researching fabrics and quilt styles of the era. They chose to recreate the crazy-quilt design of the Royal family quilt, in part using fabric salvaged from another quilt found in an antique shop.

A local church group completed the quilt by hand. The result is a reproduction quilt that honors the memory and tradition of those who first created quilts in the Stone Mountain community.

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